

Discover Nebraska's
**Roadside Flowers
and Grasses**



Nebraska Roadside Plant Identification

Nebraska's roadside seed mixtures have changed through time. The plants that you see along the highway are there because their seeds:

- occur naturally in prairie soil,
- were included in a planted seed mixture, or
- were introduced by wind, water, or other external factors.

Photos are included here to help satisfy your curiosity and to identify several prominent species of flowers, legumes and grasses in your roadside view. Because of changing philosophies regarding roadside management, some of the species pictured here are no longer used in Department of Roads' seed mixtures, especially the plants shown in the "non-native" section.



Giant Goldenrod (6)
State Flower



Little Bluestem (3)
State Grass



Roadside Vegetation in Nebraska

Roadside vegetation in Nebraska features plants that are adapted to the state's environmental conditions. Conditions such as climate, soils, and topography differ from region to region across the state. Rainfall varies from about 16 inches annually in the northwest at Harrison to 34 inches annually in the southern part of the state at Falls City.

The plants you see along the roadside may occur naturally, may have been intentionally seeded, or may have been carried there by wind, wildlife, or a passing vehicle. The Nebraska Department of Roads

(NDOR) has developed a plan to promote the use of native plant species that are most likely to thrive in the different regions of the state. Native plants that occur in these regions within Nebraska are adapted for the specific growing conditions.

NDOR's roadside seeding mixtures include cool- and warm-season grasses, legumes, and flowers. Species are selected as a roadside seed mixture according to the Nebraska region in which the NDOR project occurs.

Benefits from these customized seed mixtures include:

- Increased likelihood of the seeded plants germinating and becoming established on the roadside
- Increased durability and permanence of the plants that stabilize and beautify roadsides
- Active plant growth throughout the growing season
- Increased control of soil erosion
- Lower maintenance and mowing costs
- Planted areas blend with the natural context of the regions

The first 12 to 16 feet off the surfaced roadway is mowed regularly during the growing season. NDOR develops seed mixtures of short-growing grasses for this area immediately next to the pavement. Vegetation farther away from the roadway is mowed every 3 to 5 years. Seed mixtures for these areas include taller grasses and flowers that add color and texture to the roadside.

Roadside soils are compacted and nutrient-poor - a difficult setting in which to start new vegetation. Moisture and temperature conditions can be extreme, as well. To attain successful re-vegetation after a road construction

project is completed, NDOR crafts seed mixtures using a majority of native species, and uses common agronomic practices. This results in improved soil stabilization, reduced maintenance requirements, and a visually-pleasing roadside.

Native Species Used Statewide

Grasses

Andropogon gerardii Big bluestem
Bouteloua curtipendula Sideoats grama
Bouteloua gracilis Blue grama
Buchloe dactyloides Buffalograss
Eragrostis trichodes Sand lovegrass
Elymus canadensis Canada wildrye
Pascopyrum smithii Western wheatgrass
Panicum virgatum Switchgrass
Schizachyrium scoparium Little bluestem
Sorghastrum nutans Indiangrass

Legumes

Amorpha canescens Leadplant
Dalea purpurea Purple prairie clover

Flowers

Achillea millefolium Yarrow
Anemone canadensis Canada anemone
Cleome serrulata Rocky Mountain bee plant
Coreopsis tinctoria Plains coreopsis
Echinacea species Purple coneflowers / black Samson
Helianthus maximiliani Maximilian sunflower
Liatris species Blazing star
Linum lewisii Blue flax
Penstemon grandiflorus Shell-leaf penstemon
Polygonum species Smartweed
Ratibida columnifera Upright prairie coneflower
Ratibida columnifera, red Mexican red hat
Rosa arkansana Prairie wild rose
Rudbeckia hirta Black-eyed Susan

Grasses

Andropogon hallii Sand bluestem
Calamovilfa longifolia Prairie sandreed
Elymus lanceolatus Thickspike wheatgrass
Elymus virginicus Virginia wildrye
Nassella viridula Green needlegrass

Legumes

Desmanthus illinoensis Illinois bundleflower
Lespedeza capitata Roundhead lespedeza

Flowers

Argemone polyanthemus Prickly poppy
Aster laevis Smooth blue aster
Aster novae-angliae New England aster
Callirhoe involucrata Purple poppy mallow
Erysimum asperum Western wallflower
Tradescantia species Spiderwort

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Chamaecrista fasciculata Partridge pea
Desmanthus illinoensis Illinois bundleflower
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Ratibida pinnata Grayhead coneflower

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Ratibida pinnata Grayhead coneflower
Salvia azurina Pitcher sage
Silphium laciniatum Compass plant

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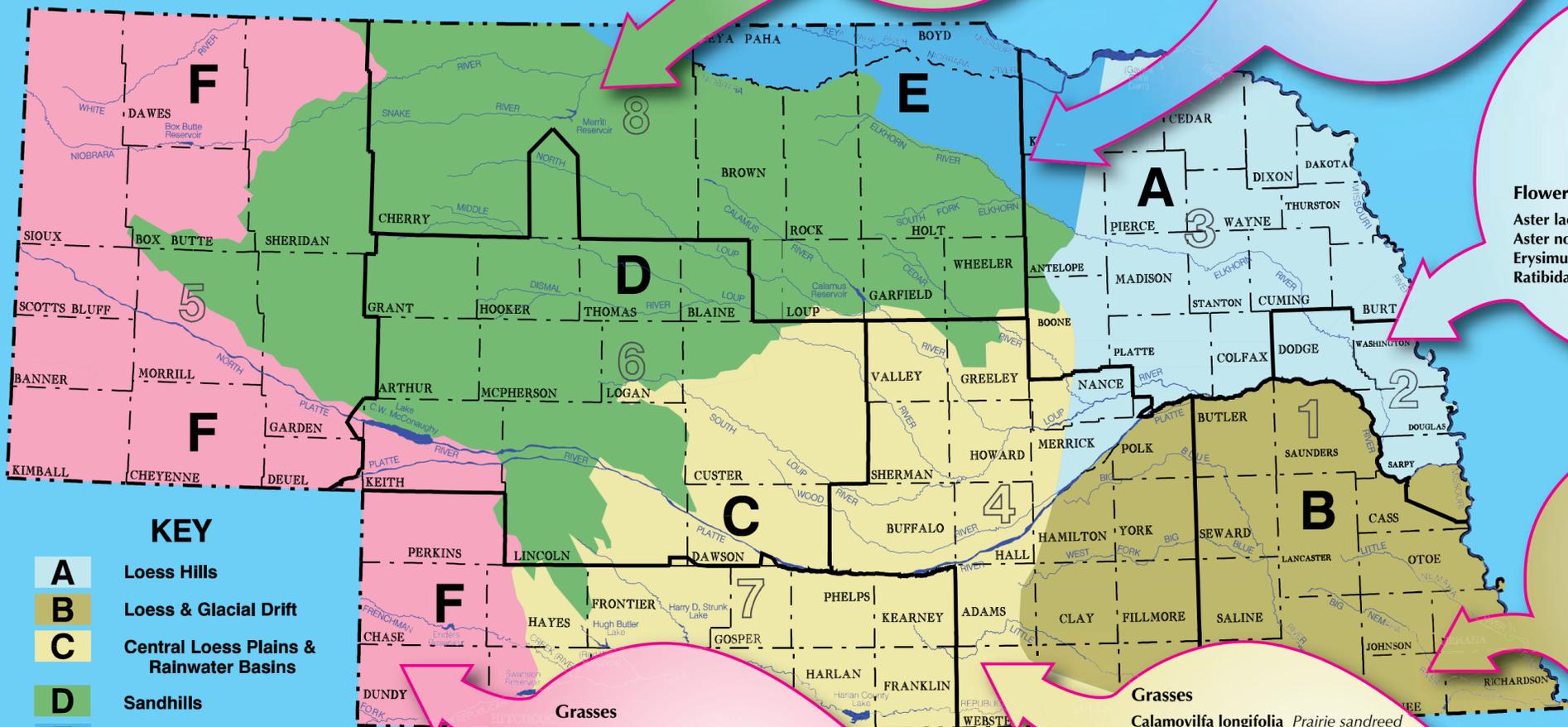
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KEY

- A** Loess Hills
- B** Loess & Glacial Drift
- C** Central Loess Plains & Rainwater Basins
- D** Sandhills
- E** Shale Plains - Tablelands
- F** High Plains
- 1** NDOR District

Nebraska Roadside Plant Identification

Flowers



Black-eyed Susan (5)



Blazing Star (3)



Blue Flax (5)



Blue Vervain (3)



Butterfly Milkweed (5)



Canada Anemone (3)



Compass Plant (5)



4-Point Evening Primrose (2)



Giant Goldenrod (6)
State Flower



Golden Glow (3)



Grayhead Coneflower (6)



Indian Blanket Flower (5)



Maximilian Sunflower (5)



Mexican Red Hat (5)



New England Aster (5)



Pale Purple Coneflower (2)



Pitcher Sage (5)



Plains Coreopsis (3)



Plains Sunflower (5)



Prairie Wild Rose (3)



Prickly Poppy (5)



Purple Poppy Mallow (3)



Rocky Mt. Bee Plant (3)



Shell Leaf Penstemon (5)



Smartweed (5)



Smooth Blue Aster (6)



Spiderwort (5)



Upright Coneflower (5)



Western Wallflower (5)



Wild Bergamot (5)

Grasses



Big Bluestem (3)



Blue Grama (5)



Buffalograss (5)



Canada Wildrye (5)



Green Needlegrass (10)



Indiangrass (3)



Little Bluestem (3)
State Grass



Prairie Junegrass (5)



Prairie Sandreed (3)



Sand Bluestem (3)



Sand Dropseed (6)



Sand Lovegrass (5)



Sideoats Grama (5)



Slender Wheatgrass (9)



Switchgrass (3)



Thick Spike Wheatgrass (8)



Virginia Wildrye (2)



Western Wheatgrass (5)

Legumes



Illinois Bundleflower (3)



Leadplant (2)



Partridge Pea (5)



Purple Prairie Clover (3)



Roundhead Lespedeza (3)



White Prairie Clover (2)

Non-Native



Bird's Foot Trefoil (4)



Chickory (5)



Crown Vetch (1)



Dame's Rocket (7)



Hairy Vetch (1)



Intermediate
Wheat Grass (10)



Ox Eye Daisy (5)



Smooth Brome (6)

(1) Photo by Scott Brummond (NDOR)
 (2) Photo by Alison Krohn (NDOR)
 (3) Photo by Steve Duecker (NDOR)
 (4) Photo by Dewaine Knutson (NDOR)
 (5) Photo by Carol Wienhold (NDOR)
 (Photographer of Cover Photo)

(6) Photo by Mike Haddock
 (7) NDOR File Photo
 (8) Photo by Sheri Hagwood
 USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database
 (9) Photo by R. Soreng, courtesy of
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